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INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

New York Times: Thousands of Interior Dept. Employees Report Harassment and Intimidation at Work

“Thousands of the Interior Department’s employees reported that they had experienced harassment or intimidation at work, a department-wide survey conducted earlier this year and released Thursday found. Of the nearly 30,000 employees who reported on their experiences, about 35 percent said they felt some form of harassment and intimidation, often related to their age or gender. More than 85 percent of those employees said they had to continue to interact with the person responsible for the mistreatment. “This is a breach of public trust,” said Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in an interview, adding that he had personally fired four people over accusations of harassment. “Harassment — intimidation — is a cancer that can destroy even the best organizations.” In the survey, 8 percent of employees reported sexual harassment, 20 percent reported negative treatment based on their age and 16 percent based on their sex. About 44 percent of the department’s 70,000 employees responded to the survey.”

THE HILL: Zinke promises ‘zero tolerance’ after 35% of Interior employees report harassment

“A survey conducted for the Interior Department found that 35 percent of its employees say they were harassed or discriminated against in the last year. The department-wide findings come on the heels of a National Park Service-specific report released in October, which found that 38 percent of that agency’s employees have been harassed or discriminated against. The survey results are spurring leaders at the department that oversees about a fifth of the nation’s land to try to crack down on the causes of harassment. Department leadership claims their aggressive actions to change the culture are a shift from the previous administration. “All employees have the right to work in a safe and harassment-free environment,” Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said in a statement on Thursday.”

ABC News: 4 senior managers at Interior Dept. fired for harassment

“Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke revealed today he has fired four senior managers at the Interior Department for inappropriate conduct, including sexual harassment. “I’ve already removed four senior leaders that were guilty of inappropriate behavior and I will remove four hundred more if necessary. Intimidation, harassment and discrimination is a cancer to any organization. However deep it goes, we will remove it from Interior,” Zinke said in a video posted on the agency’s website today. Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email the department could not provide any specific information on the people who were fired but said they generally ‘abused their authority to intimidate or harass fellow employees. This includes but is not limited to sexual harassment.’”

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

THE HILL: Conservation group launches \$1M ad campaign hitting Trump monument decision

“A conservation group is launching a \$1 million television and radio advertisement campaign

targeting three House Republicans over President Trump's decision to shrink monument protections in Utah. The Western Values Project's ads will go after Reps. Greg Walden (R-Ore.), Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-Wash.) and Martha McSally (R-Ariz.). The ads tell viewers about Trump's executive order shrinking the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments in Utah, and highlights potential public land policy changes in the three states it is set to air in. The group calls on viewers to tell Walden, Beutler and McSally to "stop the attacks on public lands because your American birthright is not for sale." The ads are some of the first to come out since Trump's Dec. 4 announcement shrinking Utah's monuments."

Deseret News: Congressional committee testily debates proposed national park in Utah

"Local leaders' role in managing a proposed national park and three new national monuments in southern Utah led to a testy exchange between a Garfield County commissioner and an Arizona congressman during a congressional hearing Thursday. Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., apparently touched a nerve while probing a provision in legislation calling for a management council made up of local officials. He wanted to know how the rural county would manage and pay for management of the lands. "You can interrogate me all day long, but we'll manage those lands a lot better than they've been managed," Garfield County Commissioner Leland Pollock said. Pollock tried to explain that local leaders would draft a plan, but the Bureau of Land Management would do the work on the ground. "Your BLM, the government's BLM would be managing them. The county wouldn't be managing the lands," he said. 'That's like saying, "Do you want me to transfer those lands?" Do it right now. Transfer me that land and I'll manage it. I'll tax it.'"

- ****LINK TO WHITE HOUSE TALKING POINTS ON MONUMENT REPORT****

OTHER TOP STORIES:

Platts: US considers weakening offshore safety rules to promote more drilling

"The Trump administration is considering easing offshore oil and natural gas safety regulations, including eliminating certain requirements for Arctic drilling put in place by the Obama administration, and cutting testing requirements for rules developed in response to BP's Deepwater Horizon disaster, an Interior Department document showed Thursday. In addition, the administration is considering giving operators access to Arctic waters for longer periods than currently allowed, a rule change regulators claim could boost interest in exploration. Details of the administration's plans of offshore rules were outlined in the Interior Department's latest statement of regulatory priorities, which was released Thursday. That plan calls for Interior's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement to rollback or weaken offshore safety regulations put in place by the Obama administration in order to promote additional oil and natural gas drilling in federal waters."

NOLA Times-Piscayne: Federal tax bill would raise Louisiana's cap for oil revenue that pays for coastal restoration

"Louisiana congressional leaders have worked a provision into the Republicans' sweeping tax bill that would substantially raise the limit on offshore oil and gas revenues Louisiana and other Gulf states can use for coastal restoration and protection projects. Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Rep. Steve Scalise (R-Jefferson) announced the provision Thursday (Dec. 13), about a week before the controversial \$1.5 trillion tax bill is expected to pass Congress and then make its way to President Trump for final approval before Christmas. Under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA), Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi and Alabama share revenue

from offshore drilling in federal waters. The new provision would increase the revenue sharing cap from \$500 million to \$650 million for the two-year period of 2020-21.”

Daily Sentinel (CO): Bennet backs BLM move to Western state

“Moving the Bureau of Land Management headquarters out of Washington, D.C., has the conditional support of U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo. Any move out of the nation's capital could earn Bennet's support “as long as the move is more than symbolic and includes resources to better manage our public lands,” his office said in a statement. Sen. Cory Gardner and Rep. Scott Tipton, both Colorado Republicans, offered companion bills in the House and Senate to move the agency's headquarters, which employs about 600 people, to a Western state. Gardner and Tipton both pointed to Grand Junction as a likely location for the agency, noting its location in the midst of BLM-administered lands and accessibility by air at Grand Junction Regional Airport.”

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